

The Wisdom of the Holy as an Influence on Life

The wisdom of the holy ranks higher than all other aspects of wisdom in this respect, that it transforms the will and personal disposition of those who pursue it, drawing them toward those lofty heights on which its concern is focused. All branches of worldly wisdom, though they describe important and noble subjects, lack this impact, to draw the nature of the person who explores them to their own level of value. Indeed, they do not relate to the other aspects of the person's nature, only to his scientific dimension.

The reason for this is that all aspects of the holy emanate from the ultimate source of life, and the content of what is hallowed has the power to engender new being, "to stretch out the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth" (Isa. 51:16), and certainly to stamp a dramatic new image on the person probing it. The secular sciences lack this potency; they do not, in themselves, engender anything new. They only portray to the mind what is found in existence. Thus they cannot turn the one who studies them into a new being, to sever him from an evil inclination in his basic self and change him into a new type of person, pure and vibrant with the light of what is the true and abiding life.

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The Summons to the Mystical

When an individual, and similarly a generation, has reached a state where its spiritual propensities are summoned to expression, then it will no longer satisfy its pressing thirst

with any fragmentary knowledge unless this very knowledge leads to a content that is broad and free, that will engender great ecstasy in the root disposition of the soul, deriving from the source of its being. Thus the mystical elements of the world, the hidden meanings of the Torah, the secret knowledge about God, are called forth from each generation.

The stubbornness of seeking spiritual satisfaction in the outer aspect of things enfeebles one's powers, fragments the human spirit, and leads the stormy quest in a direction where it will find emptiness and disappointment. In disillusionment the quest will continue in another direction.

This is the mission of the strong, those for whom the light of God is the whole meaning of their lives. Even if they have been hurt by great disappointment, even if they have grown faint because of insufficient faith in themselves, even if they have become wearied by their battle against a great multitude that follows confidently its own opinion, let them not cease their beneficent labors, let them not allow their strength to give way. In their hands is the banner of the hidden meanings of the Torah, riches of knowledge, a comprehensible and inner-directed faith, abiding deliverance for the Jewish people and for man, for body and soul, for this world and for all worlds, for great and small, for old and young.

If we say something and turn speechless, if we commence an utterance and the concept is lost in silence, if we lack the strength to liberate the word, to find the expression, we will not, for this reason, become dismayed and retreat from our fixed goal. The difficulty of speech will not serve as a restraint on the stream of the lofty desire in which the word of God is revealed, which bids us speak, to gird the stumbling with strength, to proclaim peace to the adversaries of the world. "I will cause a new utterance to be heard in the land: Peace, peace to the far and near, said the Lord; and I will heal him" (Isa. 57:19).

Vol. I, pp. 5-6.

The Mystical Dimension That Embraces Everything

Philosophy embraces only a given part of the spiritual world. By nature it is detached from whatever is outside its sphere. By this itself it is fragmented in its being. The grace of perceiving how all feelings and tendencies, from the small to the large, are interdependent, how they act on each other, how separate worlds are organically related—this it cannot portray. For this reason it must always remain an aristocratic discipline, set apart for special individuals.

Greater than this is the mystical quest, which by its nature penetrates to the depths of all thought, all feelings, all tendencies, all aspirations, and all worlds, from beginning to end. It recognizes the inner unity of all existence, the physical and the spiritual, the great and the small, and for this reason there is, from its perspective, no bigness or smallness. Everything is important, and everything is invested with marked value. There is no lost gesture, there is no vain imagining.

Corresponding to this there is no limit to the possibility of ascending toward the heights. There is no wisdom or perception concerning which one may say that it is enough, and that it cannot be linked to a higher illumination, in comparison with which it seems in a state of dimness. Even the supernal crown,¹ which is a dazzling light, a pure light, is darkness in comparison with the Cause of causes, before whom all lights are turned into darkness.

Because of this advantage, mystical vision, in being able to embrace within itself all thoughts and all sparks of the spiritual, is alone fit to chart for us the way to go.

Therefore, the mystical dimension is the soul of religion, the soul of the Torah. From its substance derives all that is revealed, all that is circumscribed, all that can be conceived by logic, and all that can be carried out in actions. The far-

1. The highest of the ten *sefirot* that emanate directly from God.

reaching unity of the mystical dimension embraces all creatures, all conditions of thought and feeling, all forms of poetry and exposition, all expressions of life, all aspirations and hopes, all objectives and ideals, from the lowest depths to the loftiest heights. The source of life deriving from the highest realm of the divine, which only the light of prophecy, the clear illumination, the light seen by Adam,² the supernal lights can disclose, streams into and passes through all stirrings of thought, all movements of the spirit.

Only the mysterious mind of the Supreme One fixes the particular formations, what shall be regarded as first and what as last, which phenomenon shall obscure the unity because of its lowly state, and which is above it because of its greatness. "And before the One what can you count?" (Sefer Yezirah, ch. 1, Mishnah 7).
Vol. I, pp. 9-10.

The Spiritual Unification of the Future

One of the great afflictions of man's spiritual world is that every discipline of knowledge, every feeling, impedes the emergence of the other. The result is that most people remain limited and one-sided, and their shortcomings are continually on the increase.

The cloud that each discipline casts on the other also leads the devotee of a particular discipline to feel a sharp antagonism toward the discipline that is remote to him, whose values are outside his concerns.

This defect cannot continue permanently. Man's nobler future is destined to come, when he will develop to a sound spiritual state so that instead of each discipline negating the

2. Prior to his fall.

The Spirit of the Masses and of the Elite

The intelligensia believes that it can separate itself from the masses, that then it will be healthier in spirit, more refined in its thinking. This is a basic error, an error that does not recognize the healthy side in natural perceptions, natural feelings, and in natural instincts, which have not been perfected but which also have not been damaged by any cultural influence.

The healthy sense of equity is much more common among ordinary people than it is among scholarly and intellectual moralists. The learned are more expert on particular aspects of morality, its rules and fine points, but the essence of its feeling is common among naturally healthy people, who make up the masses, the common people.

It is not only in the basic moral sensibility that the masses are above the elite. The religious sensibility, the feeling of the greatness of God, the sense of beauty, sensitivity—everything that pertains to a proper way of life, unfiltered in the murky vessels of knowledge and wisdom, is in a healthier and purer state among the masses.

But the masses by themselves will be unable to preserve themselves in the state of purity. They will be unable to integrate properly their concepts. They will also be unable to engage in battle when contradictory perceptions and feelings are in conflict inside themselves or in the outside world. For this they need the help of the great men of wisdom, to set straight for them the paths of their life.

But as the latter will extend to them counsel and wise guidance, so will they release on the latter an influence for a healthy life.

The partnership of the elitists with the masses is the force that keeps both sides on a sound basis, and guards them from moral and physical decadence.

Prophecy, which is channeled from the divine, has precisely this as its objective—to join the spirit of the masses

with the aristocratic spirit that is characteristic of the elitist few. The idiom of the common people is joined here with the sophisticated thought of the spiritually well endowed.

Vol. II, pp. 376-7.

The Revelation of Unity

The affirmation of the unity of God aspires to reveal the unity in the world, in man, among nations, and in the entire content of existence, without any dichotomy between action and theory, between reason and the imagination. Even the dichotomies experienced will be unified through a higher enlightenment, which recognizes their aspect of unity and compatibility. In the content of man's life this is the entire basis of holiness. In the life of the spirit it is the light of eternity, in which the temporal and the eternal merge in one whole.

This is the most august thought among the great thoughts that man's intellectual capacity can conceive. It is revealed to him through his receptivity to spiritual illumination. It may take him to the height of a revelation of the divine, by the way of reason, the knowledge called "face to face."

Vol. II, p. 425.

The Perfection of the Spiritual through the Material

When spiritual decline sets in because of a deterioration in one's bodily state, it is necessary to deal with it on the basis of its cause: to mend one's bodily state, according to a definite regimen and with firm understanding. Through the mending of the bodily condition the spiritual damage will be repaired.

In the course of life it often becomes apparent that spiritual deficiencies result from the breakdown in the proper order of the physical. The physical then asserts itself with full